



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

NATHAN FLETCHER
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: March 16, 2021

12

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

**RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND AUTHORIZE
REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

San Pasqual Academy (SPA) opened in 2001 and is a first-in-the-nation residential education campus designed to meet the unique needs of adolescent youth from the foster care system and to prepare them for self-sufficiency upon exiting care. SPA is designed to be similar to a family home-based placement and serves as an alternative placement option for dependents of the Juvenile Court, 12-17 years old, and Non-Minor Dependents up to age 19 years old. Through a unique partnership of public and private agencies such as New Alternatives, Inc., San Diego County Office of Education, Access Inc. through the support of the San Diego Workforce Partnership, and the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services (CWS), youth are provided with a seamless delivery of residential, education, work readiness and child welfare case management services.

Over the last five years, federal and State legislation have shifted the statutory requirements for keeping children safely with families. On October 11, 2015, Assembly Bill 403, also known as the Continuum of Care Reform Act (CCR), was signed into law. CCR identifies home-based settings with resource families as the best placement option for youth and limits a youth's placement in congregate care settings. As a result of multiple discussions on how to preserve SPA's unique program as permitted through the parameters of CCR, an updated Program Statement for a three-year Pilot Project for the period of December 1, 2018 through December 31, 2021 was approved by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on August 17, 2018.

More recently, on February 9, 2018, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was signed into law as part of Public Law (P.L.) 115-123. FFPSA provides federal funding for prevention services and adds new requirements on reducing congregate care placements and increasing supports for children in foster care to live in kinship and community family settings.

On February 8, 2021, CWS was notified by CDSS that the SPA three-year Pilot Project would terminate effective October 1, 2021 rather than December 31, 2021 because SPA is not recognized as a family setting and does not meet the requirements to be a therapeutic placement setting outlined in federal requirements under FFPSA. Based on the positive outcomes demonstrated by

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

youth placed at SPA and alumni, and the input received from stakeholders, today's action requests the Board provide authorization to request an extension from CDSS to continue operating SPA through June 30, 2022. If approved, this extension will provide CWS the opportunity to continue to engage youth and partners to explore other models that may extend the successful outcomes of SPA to a wider foster youth population. This action supports the County of San Diego's *Live Well San Diego* vision by providing a continuum of safe and thriving placement options and accelerated permanency to children and youth interacting with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Receive the update regarding the San Pasqual Academy.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to request an extension from the California Department of Social Services to operate San Pasqual Academy through June 30, 2022.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for San Pasqual Academy (SPA) are currently included in the Fiscal Year 2020-22 Operational Plan in the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). The funding sources include Title IV-E federal funding, federal Short-Doyle Medi-Cal funding, Realignment, and General Purpose Revenue. If approved by CDSS to continue operations at SPA, the County would need to invest approximately \$1.4 million in additional one-time realignment funds to cover lost Title IV-E federal funding from October 1, 2021- June 30, 2022. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

This item was presented to the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board as an informational item on March 12, 2021.

This item will be presented to the San Pasqual Academy (SPA) Advisory Board as an informational item on March 18, 2021.

BACKGROUND

San Pasqual Academy (SPA) opened in 2001 and is a first-in-the-nation residential education campus designed to meet the unique needs of adolescent youth in the foster care system and to prepare them for self-sufficiency upon exiting care. SPA is designed to be similar to a family home-based placement and serves as an alternative placement option for dependents of the Juvenile Court, 12-17 years old, and Non-Minor Dependents up to age 19 years old. Through a unique partnership of public and private agencies such as New Alternatives, Inc., San Diego

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

County Office of Education, Access Inc. through the support of the San Diego Workforce Partnership, and the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency, Child Welfare Services (CWS), youth are provided with a seamless delivery of residential, education, work readiness and child welfare case management services.

Collaborative and comprehensive services and supports provided at SPA include:

- Individualized education on campus for grades nine through twelve;
- Independent living skills training;
- Health, wellness, and therapeutic services;
- Work readiness training, workshops, and internships;
- Extra-curricular and enrichment activities such as music lessons, intramural sports, and community services; and
- Family connections and permanent support systems.

Additionally, SPA provides youth with relational supports during their stay at SPA and post-graduation through the San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (SPAN) grandparents program and alumni services. The SPAN program consists of volunteers living on campus who develop natural relationships with the youth, offering mentoring and life skills opportunities. The alumni services offered by New Alternatives, Inc. allow alumni to return “home” from college during holidays and school breaks, as well as receive support during times of crisis.

Changes in Child Welfare System Landscape

SPA was designed to improve the outcomes of youth exiting foster care unprepared for independence, by providing a long-term placement in an independent living skills environment so youth could focus on completing their high school education. The youth originally identified and placed at the SPA were high school age youth, unlikely to return home, and in long-term foster care situations. Participating youth did not require the intensive treatment offered by other congregate care settings but were unable to be successfully placed in a foster home. Instead, the youth needed stability, structure, and support. Over the last ten years, in an effort to increase supports to youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and continue the programming that SPA is designed for, SPA has accommodated the changing needs of the foster care population by considering the following types of youth for placement:

- In middle school to allow sibling groups to remain intact;
- In active family reunification cases;
- In dual status cases (youth interacting with both child welfare and juvenile justice systems);
- With low level offenses active to probation, and
- From neighboring counties.

The campus culture has shifted with more youth in active family reunification cases who are transitioning home or to relatives soon after placement, contributing to considerably shorter lengths of stay, which is a shift away from the SPA model. Additionally, the needs of youth referred and placed at SPA have also changed in the last five years. As CWS continues to deepen prevention and family strengthening efforts, fewer youth are entering into the child welfare and

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

juvenile justice systems. The youth who cannot be safely maintained in their homes with their biological families and enter foster care have often been exposed to severe complex trauma and present with significant mental and behavioral health needs to include but not limited to, substance use history and behaviors consistent with the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Youth presenting with these behaviors and intensive needs may require a higher level of care that is not in alignment with the SPA model.

Legislative Changes

Over the last five years, federal and State legislation have significantly shifted the statutory requirements for keeping children safely with families. On October 11, 2015, Assembly Bill 403, also known as the Continuum of Care Reform Act (CCR), was signed into law. CCR provides the policy and statutory framework to ensure that services and supports for children and youth and their families are tailored toward the ultimate goal of maintaining a stable family. Drawing upon a body of research that shows that youth who suffer from abuse and neglect do best when they can live in a supportive, home-based, family environment, CCR identifies home-based settings with resource families as the best placement option for youth. Additionally, CCR limits a youth's placement in congregate care settings to a new licensing category, Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs), with a duration of no longer than six months in order to receive intensive treatment to transition to a home-based setting. CCR eliminated the use of licensed group homes as a placement option for foster youth. Group homes were to convert to a STRTP or any other licensing category available to foster youth. While SPA is licensed by the California Community Care Licensing division as a group home, the distinctive services offered set the program apart from other licensed congregate care facilities.

CCR included language to help preserve SPA and recognizes that the program, though licensed as a group home, was built around a residential education environment that promotes independence and self-sufficiency while focusing on completing high school, preparing for the world of work, practicing independent living skills, and developing relational permanency. As a result of multiple discussions on how to preserve SPA's unique program as permitted through the parameters of CCR, an updated Program Statement for a three-year Pilot Project for the period of December 1, 2018 through December 31, 2021 was approved by California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on August 17, 2018. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU #18-6017) between CDSS and the County outlined how SPA will promote the principles of CCR and solidified SPA's on-going operation.

More recently, on February 9, 2018, the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was signed into law as part of Public Law (P.L.) 115-123. FFPSA paves the way for a family strengthening, prevention focused infrastructure intended to enhance supportive services for families to help keep children safely at home, reduce the reliance on and use of congregate care, and expand the capacity and use of kinship care and family-based settings to support children and families. In addition to funding for prevention services, FFPSA also places new requirements on reducing congregate care placements and increasing supports for children in foster care to live in kinship and community family settings. Child welfare systems must ensure alignment with the new FFPSA federal child welfare requirements prior to receiving federal prevention funding. California will fully implement FFPSA on October 1, 2021.

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

With multiple sweeping legislative changes and child welfare transformations to increase family strengthening and prevention efforts and improve permanency outcomes for youth in foster care, SPA continued to experience a shift in campus culture and be impacted by trends in the foster care population. Youth needs increased from multiple complex trauma experiences and required more intensive services, interventions, and stabilization prior to consideration for placement at SPA. SPA evolved in support of the changing child welfare landscape and bolstered collaborative efforts to increase SPA referrals to extend the unique services and supports offered and be in line with its licensing capacity for 184 youth, maintain programming operations, and sustain the viability of SPA as a placement option.

Operational Developments

In an effort to conform to State and federal laws, and align with national best practices and relevant research, CWS reduced the number of children in congregate settings (excluding San Pasqual Academy) by 69% over the past 10 years.

- As of January 1, 2021, CWS data reflects that only 216 of 2,238 children (ages 0-17) remain in congregate care settings.
 - 72 of which are at San Pasqual Academy;
 - 47 are at Polinsky Children's Center, a 10-day assessment center; and
 - 97 are in a STRTP.
- As of March 1, 2021, the current population of youth at SPA is 69.

Overall, CWS efforts continue to be on the right trajectory to align with the direction that child welfare is headed in nationally, and even with the changing landscape of child welfare, trends of youth in foster care, and legislation, SPA continues efforts to provide comprehensive services and prepare youth for self-sufficiency and maintain viability as an alternative placement option for adolescent youth interacting with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In consideration of the significant changes in State and federal policy on the use of congregate care settings, the significant decrease in the foster youth population overall, especially of those requiring long-term high level of care, and the impact on the ability to draw down federal funding based on new legislation, it was determined by CDSS that SPA is no longer a viable placement option for teens in foster care in San Diego County.

On February 8, 2021, CWS was notified by CDSS that the SPA three-year Pilot Project would terminate effective October 1, 2021 rather than December 31, 2021. CDSS informed the County that because SPA is not amending its operations and programming to convert to a STRTP or any other licensing category available to youth in foster care, its educationally based residential program is unsustainable for foster care under CCR. As of October 1, 2021, the beginning of the federal fiscal year, there will no longer be federal Title IV-E funding authority to operate SPA, because it is not recognized as a family setting nor does it meet the requirements to be a therapeutic placement setting outlined in federal requirements under FFPSA. Title IV-E federal funding covers approximately 14% of the SPA budget and the County would need to invest approximately \$1.4 million in additional realignment funds to cover lost Title IV-E federal funding from October 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022.

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

Based on the positive outcomes demonstrated by youth placed at SPA and alumni, and the input received from stakeholders, today's actions request the San Diego County Board of Supervisors authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to request an extension from CDSS to allow SPA to continue operating through June 30, 2022. If approved, this extension will provide CWS the opportunity to continue to engage youth and partners to explore other models that may extend the successful outcomes of SPA to a wider foster youth population.

Next Steps - Community Engagement

Stakeholders, including current and former foster youth, have been vocal about the desire for the continuance of SPA to serve the unique needs of adolescent foster youth despite the implications of CCR and the FFPSA. In an effort to gather information and explore all feasible options best suited to meet the needs of adolescent foster youth, the County will utilize the Child and Family Strengthening Advisory Board (CFSAB) and its subcommittees as a forum for stakeholders and community members to provide input. Meetings and additional community forums are scheduled to engage and allow stakeholders, including current and former foster youth, to provide suggestions on feasible placement options, models, and next steps for SPA's program.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

This action supports the Building Better Health, Living Safely, and Thriving initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, as well as the County of San Diego's *Live Well San Diego* vision by providing a continuum of safe and thriving placement options and accelerated permanency to children and youth interacting with child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A

SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: ☐ Yes ☒ No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED

☐ Yes ☒ No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:

November 13, 2018 (13), Authorized the execution of the Memorandum of Understanding between California Department of Social Services and County of San Diego; March 13, 2012 (5), Authorized draft of San Pasqual Academy Board of Supervisors Policy and support for San Pasqual Academy; December 10, 2002, Established a capital project and appropriations for the San Pasqual Academy Health and Wellness Center; December 10, 2002, Allocated funds to San Pasqual Academy; July 30, 2002, Authorized grant funding for San Pasqual Academy; April 16, 2002, Authorized acceptance of donations for San Pasqual Academy; March 12, 2002, Authorized acceptance of donations for the San Pasqual Academy; February 5, 2002 (1), Established appropriations for San Pasqual Academy and approved solicitation of bids and award of architectural services; September 25, 2001, Authorized acceptance of donations for San Pasqual Academy; October 10, 2000 (02), Established appropriations for San Pasqual Academy; April 12, 2000 (1), Approved financing documents for San Pasqual Academy; April 11, 2000 (1), Approved financing documents and adopted Resolution No. 00-107 for San Pasqual Academy Project; March 21, 2000 (6), Authorized transfer of appropriations and issuance of Request for Proposal to operate San Pasqual Academy; October 12, 1999 (1), authorized financing for San Pasqual Academy; September 28, 1999 (1), Received an update on funding prospects; May 18, 1999 (11/12) directed exploration of feasibility to acquire and renovate San Pasqual Academy.

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:

E-15, San Pasqual Academy

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:

N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:

N/A

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION
NUMBER(S):**

Contract number 45216

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Health and Human Services Agency

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): N/A

SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE REGARDING SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY AND
AUTHORIZE REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)

CONTACT PERSON(S):

Kimberly Giardina

Name

858-616-5812

Phone

Kimberly.Giardina@sdcounty.ca.gov

E-mail

Margo Fudge

Name

858-616-5989

Phone

Margo.Fudge@sdcounty.ca.gov

E-mail